

OCm 6/24/97

1/2

40 years ago, 'ghostly shape' arrived

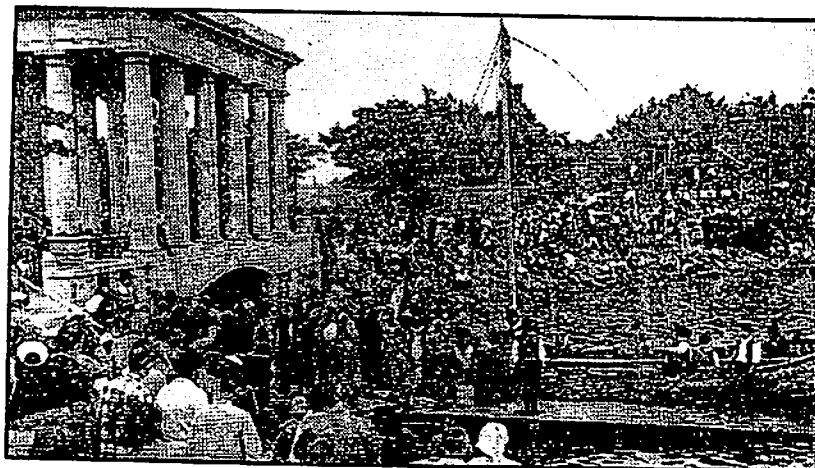
Mayflower II marks an anniversary

By Charles Mathewson
MPG Newspapers

PLYMOUTH — Forty years ago last week Lothrop "Loafy" Withington helped row a boat into Plymouth Harbor. The national TV and radio networks reported the voyage live to the nation.

"It was a very exciting thing," Withington said. "Everyone was watching and we knew it. It was a lot of fun."

The boat he and his brothers and cousins rowed on June 13, 1957, was the Plymouth-built shallop. It met the English-built *Mayflower II* at its mooring 400 feet from shore. While the country watched, the shallop met the ship and brought its master, Alan Villiers, and his crew to shore. Over



File photo

The arrival of *Mayflower II* on June 13, 1957.

the next 13 days of parades, speeches and concerts the shallop crew made several trips between ship and shore.

"We ferried all the crew off the boat and all the dignitaries over to

it," Withington said. "We took Richard Nixon, who was vice president then. We took Jack Kennedy, who was a senator at the time."

Three years later Kennedy

would head to the Democratic convention to get his party's nomination and beat Nixon for the presidency. Fifteen years and four days later burglars would break into the Watergate complex to begin the undoing of Nixon's presidency.

Kennedy's assassination and Watergate changed the way the country saw itself. Forty years ago, when *Mayflower II* came to its home port for the first time, the town reflected the nation's post-war optimism, welcoming Nixon as a respected public figure, celebrating with a concert of patriotic and religious music performed by a 120-voice choir at the bottom of Cole's Hill on Water Street, sharing in a gathering of 47 New England Indian tribes, accepting the trans-Atlantic gift of a ship from England.

An Englishman named Warwick
Please turn to page A14

■ *Mayflower II*

2/2

Continued from page A1

Chariton and a group of New Englanders, led by Plymouth's Hornblower family, had parallel dreams. Chariton wanted to build a replica of the original *Mayflower* and sail it from Plymouth to Plymouth. A group of people in Massachusetts envisioned Plimoth Plantation. The two dreams came together when *Mayflower II* in Plymouth Harbor.

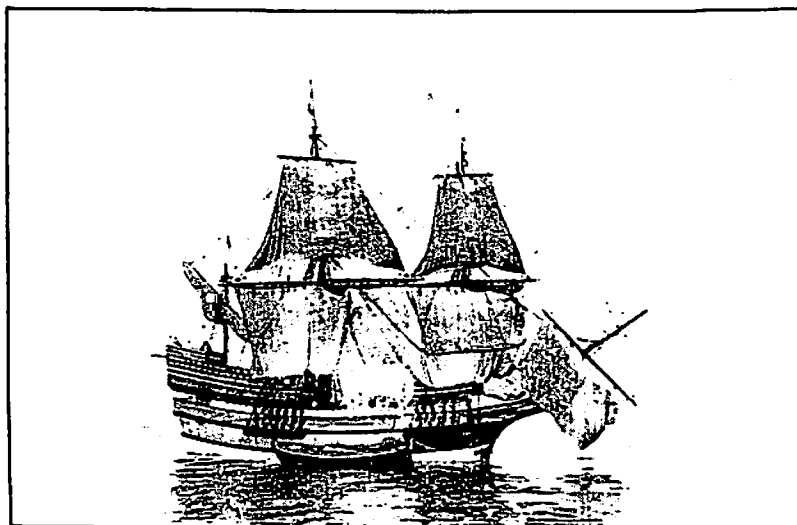
The ship made landfall on Wednesday, June 12, at Provincetown. It was sighted off the Gurnet just after 7 a.m. Thursday morning.

"A ghostly shape emerging out of the early morning haze, the *Mayflower II* was first sighted off Plymouth, due east, on a calm sea, at about half past seven this morning," Walter Haskell wrote in the *Old colony Memorial* of June 13, 1957. "Only a handful of people were on the waterfront to catch this very first glimpse of the now famous replica. But as word got around, the crowd converged on the Cole's Hill area from all directions."

The ship took a tow into the harbor, but flew some sails in a light breeze. It moored at a red and white buoy 400 feet from shore.

The *Old Colony Memorial* coordinated the assignment of more than 350 press credentials for print and electronic media from around the world. They flew in a helicopter over the harbor. They stood in towers on either side of Plymouth Rock. They took camera positions on top of Cole's Hill. They recorded the ceremonial cannon shot from the Plymouth Yacht Club. They tracked the shallop's row out to the ship.

"Jack Chase from Channel 4 in



File photo

Mayflower II is a replica of the Pilgrim ship.

Boston was on the shallop with us," Withington said. "He was dressed as a Pilgrim and relaying his report to a helicopter above us and it went from there to the TV station."

The same week Plymouth High School graduated 115 seniors. The school's chorus sang "The Star Spangled Banner" as the shallop approached, followed by "The Breaking Waves Dashed High" as the shallop began its return to shore. Drummer Harold Boyer led a welcoming group from the stage at the foot of Cole's Hill to a spot beside Plymouth Rock where Ellis Brewster greeted the captain of the *Mayflower II*.

All of the shallop crew members were Pilgrim descendants, something Withington never felt good about.

"There should have been someone from each precinct in town," Withington said. "I'm proud to be

a Mayflower descendant, but it doesn't mean much to someone whose ancestors came on a different boat. I like to say we're all Pilgrims."

The ship stayed in Plymouth for 13 days, then went on a tour of the East Coast as far south as St. Augustine, Fla. When it returned, it became a permanent exhibit of Plimoth Plantation, docked at State Pier. This summer the museum is rehabbing the ship and changing its 17th century interpretive program to give a history of the modern vessel.

In recent years the waterfront, under the masts of *Mayflower II* has been the stage for protests against the landing of European culture here. The celebrations of 40 years ago could not occur now.

"It was a big event then," Withington said. "I think we'd have a lot more sense about it today."